

i can't tell one from the other (did i find you or you find me?) by cahstle

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Summary:

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“If you’d died down there I don’t know what the fuck I would have done, Eddie.” A sharp bark of laughter that sounded anything but left his lips. “I think I would have died.” The admission is softer and quieter than the rest of his words had been and Richie grit his teeth, running a trembling down his face.

1. home is where i want to be.

Author's Note:

title from the talking head's this must be the place
i also religiously listened to the lumineers' version

Richie was a lot of things, but hopeful was something he desperately tried not to let himself be. Which was why finding himself here in his LA apartment lying awake, staring at the ceiling while one Eddie Kaspbrak was sleeping beside him, in his bed, absolutely bizarre. Eight months had passed since Derry. Five months since Eddie had been discharged from the hospital. Just over four months since Eddie served Myra divorce papers, packed up some necessities in the three suitcases he had at his disposal, and hopped on a plane to the west coast.

Of course, there had been conversations between then and now, but Richie would have opened up his door, his apartment, his life to Eddie even if he had shown up out of the blue. There had been conversations though, in which Richie had offered his apartment as soon as Eddie uttered the word 'divorce'. Maybe that made him sound desperate, or made it easy for Eddie to decipher his feelings, but it is what lead them to where they were.

In the beginning, Richie wasn't trying to be a gentleman when he'd given up his bed to Eddie and made himself a bed on the less than shitty couch that took up half his living room. He told himself he was doing it because Eddie was still healing, be he knew he'd be doing the same even if Eddie wasn't still bandaged, he would have given up his bed. Eddie had tried to argue but Richie was prepared for that and wasn't relenting.

It'd lasted about two weeks before Eddie started fighting him on it again. Richie made a point of not complaining about how much his back actually hurt from his restless sleep but he couldn't stop himself from trying various stretches after a couple of nights to relieve some of the building tension in his muscles. Eddie had offered to switch him and sleep on the couch and there was no way in hell Richie was going to let him, so he just let Eddie speak at him until finally

agreeing to share his bed. In reality, it was plenty big enough for the both of them - a king-sized bed was one of the things Richie let himself splurge on - they could both lay spread out and only be minimally touching, Richie was just... afraid. Afraid of being too much and showing too much.

The first night Richie shared a bed with Eddie, he hadn't slept at all. As soon as Eddie had fallen asleep there wasn't anything Richie could have done to tear his eyes away from Eddie's sleeping form. At the first signs of Eddie waking, Richie had drug himself out of bed and into the kitchen to make a fresh pot of coffee. Neither of them talked about the previous night and despite the lack of sleep, lying in that bed had left Richie feeling... rested. He'd gotten minimally better but even just three or four hours, sleeping next to Eddie was the best Richie had ever gotten.

—

On a night not unlike the rest, Richie was spread out on his back waiting for exhaustion to hit him when Eddie rolled over, subconsciously seeking Richie's warmth. That was another thing they didn't address in the mornings: how often Richie would wake up with Eddie in his arms, head on his shoulder. With minimal movement, Richie shifted so his gaze landed on the sleeping form next to him. Once again memorizing the gentle slope of Eddie's features, the slow and steady rise and fall of his breathing.

Without warning, the realization of how close he'd come to losing this, losing Eddie, hit him once again like blunt trauma to the abdomen. There was nothing Richie could do to stop the sudden onslaught of tears. Richie's arm lifted too quickly as he frantically pressed the palm of his hand to his mouth to muffle the wrecked sob that forced its way out of his throat. He must have jostled Eddie too much, in his peripheral he could see Eddie wince as he blinked his eyes open and loosely looped an arm across the bandages on his ribs.

"... Richie?"

The soft, sleep-thick sound of Eddie's voice only managed to make

hot shame pool in Richie's stomach. As Richie moves his hands to roughly wipe at the wetness under his glasses he can feel the indentions he teeth had made on the heel of his hand. He hadn't felt how hard he was biting down, but he could sure feel the sting of it now. Richie had barely managed a breath, trying to calm the shaking of his shoulders, before another sob wracked through his body. With nothing pressed against his mouth to muffle the sound, the broken noise was almost deafening to Richie's ears.

"*Fuck*, fuck I'm sorry." Richie's voice didn't sound any better than he felt, and he wanted nothing more than to roll out of the bed and just go. Leave the room, the apartment. He didn't know how he was going to do any of it, face Eddie and the questions he was bound to ask, but as soon as he began to move Eddie's hand wrapped fast around his wrist.

"No, Rich, talk to me." The grip around Richie's wrist tightened momentarily before releasing as Eddie moved to wrap his arm under and around his shoulders instead. The hold was light and barely there, giving Richie every opportunity to pull away. He didn't. Rather, he leaned farther into the touch despite being unable to look Eddie in the eye.

Richie tried again, taking a deep breath. It worked, minimally, his sobs and heaving breaths didn't stop altogether but they calmed and quieted into something manageable. In the back of his mind, Richie knew that Eddie was waiting patiently for him to give an explanation, an answer, a *reason*, and at that moment Richie couldn't imagine telling him anything but the truth. The moment the thought crossed his mind there was nothing he could do to stop the words from spilling out of his mouth.

"I love you," His voice was raw and cracked and he was breaking open his chest to bare his *soul*, but the floodgates were open and there was no halt in the flow. "*Fuck* I think I've loved you my whole life."

"Richie-" Eddie's voice was burdened with the weight of... something. Richie didn't let himself contemplate it.

"No, please- just let me." Richie took another deep breath, but it was

little more than a hiss through his teeth. “Shit, I was thirteen when I knew you were it for me Kaspbrak,” The words were as heavy as a brand and the laugh he tried to lighten it with wasn’t any lighter. “And then I didn’t know, but in the back of my mind, I always knew. You weren’t there but you *were*. Then going back and everything coming back, everything fit like a missing piece. Fuck, *you* were the missing piece.”

Richie roughly wiped at the wetness under his glasses before pushing them to rest atop his head, he couldn’t see through the fog on them anyway. “And then - *fuck*,” A sharp intake of breath stalled his words, “- you almost died. I’d just gotten you back and I almost lost you.”

“Richie look at me,” Eddie’s words were a whisper and a plea but Richie simply bit the inside of his lip hard enough to draw blood and gently shook his head before continuing.

“If you’d died down there I don’t know what the fuck I would have done, Eddie.” A sharp bark of laughter that sounded anything but left his lips. “I think I would have died.” The admission is softer and quieter than the rest of his words had been and Richie grit his teeth, running a trembling down his face.

“Richie *look at me*,” Eddie was grabbing Richie’s face with both hands before he could make another excuse. Richie’s eyes squeezed shut tightly as another wave of hot tears hit his cheeks.

“This is enough,” Richie forced his eyes open, meeting Eddie’s through his blurry vision. “It’s *enough*. It’s enough.” A soft hiccuped sob passed his lips before he could continue. “It’s enough, Eddie. I’d never ask you for something you didn’t- couldn’t- **Fuck**.”

Eddie’s grip tightened in the hair against Richie’s temples and Richie released a shuddering breath and tightly closed his eyes. “I won’t ask you for anything. You don’t have to give me anything. I just-”

Richie’s words were abruptly cut off by Eddie roughly pulling his face forward and covering his lips with his own. It wasn’t much of a kiss. As soon as Richie was aware of it, he was absolutely terrified to move.

“You *asshole*,” The words were a breath against Richie’s lips and punctuated with another bruising kiss. This time Richie was expecting it and responded quickly, parting his lips to accommodate. His hand flew to rest on Eddie’s hip and the sound he made when he first tasted Eddie was that of a dying man.

“You fucking asshole,” Eddie was shoving at Richie’s shoulder and swinging a leg over his thighs as soon as Richie’s back hit the mattress. A painful hiss passed his lips when the movement twinged his still-healing wound, but it didn’t stop him.

“*Eddie*,” A noise of protest was followed by Eddie’s name repeated like a mantra and Richie didn’t think he could stop himself from grabbing Eddie’s hips in both hands even if he’d tried. “I-”

Eddie was already moving again, grabbing two handfuls of Richie’s hair and leaning down into a kiss that was more tongue and teeth than lips. That one *hurt*, pulling at the stitches holding Eddie together and pulling a pained whine from the back of his throat, but Richie’s mouth tasted like blood and the toothpaste he insisted they share because Eddie picked it out.

“Eddie, *Eddie stop*,” Richie pleaded, not daring to move or push Eddie away. Richie’s mind and body were on two different wavelengths and he wanted nothing more than to tighten his grip on Eddie’s thighs and roll his hips up against his warmth. “Please, you’re hurting yourself.”

“*Shut up*. Shut up, I-” Eddie’s grip on his hair tightened, pulling on the strands, and Richie had to bite his tongue to choke back a broken moan. “**Fuck**. Fuck you, Richie. *I love you*.”

Richie would vehemently deny the broken, near wail that passed his lips hearing the admission. He closed his eyes once more because everything was suddenly too much and not enough at once. Eddie’s weight on top of him, his breath warm against his face, *holding* Eddie, gripping his hips tighter before releasing. “I-”

“No, my turn Tozier.” Eddie relaxed his grip on Richie’s hair and slumped forward, forehead pressing into Richie’s shoulder. He was moving his legs again a beat after so he was no longer straddling

Richie as much as he was spread out atop him. "You can't just say shit like that I- *of course*, I fucking love you, asshole."

"*Eddie*," Richie blinked rapidly against the newfound onslaught of tears and he was acutely aware of every press of Eddie's body against his own, including the spreading dampness where Eddie pressed his face harder against his shoulder. The only movement he dared make was outstretching his fingers to intertwine with Eddie's.

"I don't think I've ever loved anyone the way I love you," The words were followed by a garbled, frustrated sound, and a sigh as Eddie turned to watch Richie's face.

"I-" Eddie's eyes were shining and his voice cracked before he cleared his throat and tried again. "I didn't think you-"

"I do," Richie breathed the words against Eddie's temple, briefly tightening his grip on Eddie's hand.

He knew this conversation wasn't over, but he allowed a comfortable silence to fall between them. It was late, after all, and he knew how exhausted Eddie must be because he was feeling it himself.

It was the easiest thing in the world for Richie to press a kiss to Eddie's hairline and match his breathing to Eddie's.

2. i guess that this must be the place

Summary for the Chapter:

With incredible effort, Richie managed to focus on the task at hand and keep his sideways glances at Eddie to a minimum. Soon enough, however, the dishwasher was being closed with a click and Eddie was resting the dishtowel back on its place on the oven's handle. Richie turned, leaning back against the counter, to watch. He watched the bob of Eddie's throat when he swallowed. Watched Eddie's eyes flick down to the ground and back up to meet his eyes when Eddie took a step forward, crowding into his space.

"Do you want to-" The words were barely out of Eddie's mouth before Richie was nodding.

"Yeah," Richie's voice came out no louder than a whisper and he cleared his throat, trying again. "Yeah."

In the months that followed, as Eddie healed, Richie wanted to expect a fundamental shift. He should have known better: as time passed the more he realized things were staying the same. There was still the same blanket of domesticity that covered the whole of his apartment, there had to be - Eddie had begun working from his home with his laptop set up on an Ikea desk that Richie had bought and set up in front of the living room window and Richie had been carrying around a notebook that quickly became disgustingly worn as he wrote any and all material that came to mind - it wasn't like they left the house that often. Richie still got up earlier than Eddie but now instead of fleeing, he lingered, more often than not waiting until Eddie stirred to get up and make coffee for them both. It was found out very quickly that both of them were shit at cooking, so they ordered in and found the time to sit and eat together most nights.

A lot remained the same, but it was the little things that caught Richie off guard. Now Richie was allowed to look without fear of

being caught, he was allowed to *touch*, and he **did**. Richie initiated a conversation again, of course, originally because he wanted to tell Eddie he wasn't going to hold him to words he'd said in comfort in the dead of night. Eddie had called him an idiot, which was fair, and put a hand on either of Richie's cheeks and pulled him down into a kiss. Both of them had tasted like stale coffee. Eddie made a face when he'd pulled away, told him to brush his teeth, and that was that.

The day Eddie had his stitches removed Richie had a meeting set with his manager. Richie had offered to reschedule, had told Eddie the meeting could wait, but they ended up going their separate ways out the door. There was a heavy, unspoken weight between them. With the stitches being removed, Richie had no excuse to hide behind. It wasn't that Richie didn't want to touch Eddie, it was quite the opposite, he wanted so much it terrified him. With the barrier he'd been hiding behind since that first night being torn down, Richie knew he'd be forced to communicate his feelings and fears like an adult and that scared him almost as much as the prospect of physical intimacy did.

Eddie was bound to be home before Richie was, so Richie picked up dinner on his way home. If the nerves twisting in his stomach made him throw up before he'd made his way up to the apartment, that was no one's business but his own. - They still ate sitting on the couch in the living room with the stupid dinner plates that Eddie insisted they needed. There was some bullshit documentary playing on the tv that neither of them paid much attention to.

The dishes were usually done together: one of them would wash and the other would dry or fill the dishwasher. It was a smooth system and it worked for them. The kitchen would usually be washed in a companionable silence but that night the air was thick enough Richie swore he could have run a knife through it. Anticipation burned a hole in the pit of his stomach, so Richie filled the tense silence with a running commentary.

With incredible effort, Richie managed to focus on the task at hand and keep his sideways glances at Eddie to a minimum. Soon enough,

however, the dishwasher was being closed with a click and Eddie was resting the dishtowel back on its place on the oven's handle. Richie turned, leaning back against the counter, to watch. He watched the bob of Eddie's throat when he swallowed. Watched Eddie's eyes flick down to the ground and back up to meet his eyes when Eddie took a step forward, crowding into his space.

"Do you want to-" The words were barely out of Eddie's mouth before Richie was nodding.

"Yeah," Richie's voice came out no louder than a whisper and he cleared his throat, trying again. "Yeah."

Eddie nodded with some sort of finality. His hands were looped around the back of Richie's neck not a moment later and Richie leaned in to meet him halfway. Eddie's lips were soft against his own, a feeling he was sure he'd never get tired of, and he didn't mind the awkward angle he had to lean into. He brought his hands up to rest on Eddie's hips, thumbing the hem of his shirt up to rub smooth circles into Eddie's skin.

Richie chewed on the inside of his lip when they pulled away for a breath, eyes flicking between Eddie's who met his searching gaze head-on. The corner of Eddie's mouth ticked up and Richie took the invitation for what it was, dipping back in for another chaste press of lips. Eddie must not have been satisfied with the set pace because Richie could feel the irritated huff of air Eddie let out against his cheek. He was going to pull away to ask when he felt Eddie's teeth sink into the flesh of his lower lip. Oh. *Oh.*

Richie made a soft noise in the back of his throat and parted his lips accordingly. He could feel, more than hear, Eddie's answering hum with the first curious swipe of Eddie's tongue along his lip. They'd done this before, but each time felt just as new as the first. Richie kicked into gear and matched Eddie's pace with a sort of enthusiasm that had him breathing far too heavily far too quickly.

Eddie pulled back once more with another gentle nip to Richie's bottom lip. They sat there a moment, catching their breath as they shared each other's air before Eddie spoke. "Rich take me to bed,"

Richie would be embarrassed about the sharp, gasping sound he made if it was anyone else. But this was Eddie, and he didn't have to ask Richie twice.

Richie, for the life of him, cannot begin to fathom how he'd got here. He has his thighs spread on either side of Eddie's hips and he's bracing himself up with arms bracketing Eddie's head, fingers digging into the sheets. Richie's pressing open-mouthed kisses down the side of Eddie's neck and he groans when Eddie's fingers dig into the meat of his hips. Selfishly, he hopes it bruises. At some point, between the kitchen and where they were now, they'd shed most of their clothes. Richie's shirt and pants joined the sweats Eddie had been wearing on the floor somewhere in the apartment. Eddie's shirt was still on, but Richie wasn't going to press. He hadn't asked Eddie to take it off and Eddie hadn't made any move to do so, and Richie *understood*.

Richie rolled his hips down, feeling the evidence of Eddie's arousal press hot against his thigh. The breathless sound that left Richie's throat was nothing compared to the curses that fell from Eddie's lips. The corner of Richie's mouth ticked up and he smugly bit underneath Eddie's pulse point.

"Fucker," Eddie hissed, but there was no heat behind it. A beat later he was reaching his hand down between their bodies, lightly tracing the outline of Richie's cock through his boxers.

"Oh fuck," Richie chokes out the words, reeling his head back so he could see Eddie's face. There was a blush high on Eddie's cheeks, but it was his turn to look smug as he dipped his hand into the fabric. Eddie tipped his head up to press kisses down the side of Richie's throat so he didn't have to watch his expression while he experimentally wrapped his hand around Richie's cock and thumbed at the head. The weight of it in his hand was hot and heavy and it makes Eddie's head spin.

Richie's head dips forward and the hair that falls in his face sticks to the sweat on his forehead. His glasses slip a bit further down his nose but he makes no move to fix them. There's a moan caught in the back of Richie's throat and he bites into his lower lip to keep the sound in.

It's an old habit that's hard to drop, from years of fumbling in dirty bathrooms of dive bars or shitty comedy clubs. From years of getting off with strangers he'd never see again and feeling like absolute shit afterward.

"You know," Richie starts, already wishing he could just keep his stupid mouth shut. "This might be the first good experience I've had with someone touching my dick."

Eddie's hand immediately stills and his lips detach from the mark he was worrying on the spot where Richie's neck met his shoulder. Richie suppresses a whine at the loss but forces himself to make some sort of eye contact when he feels Eddie's mouth open and close like he's trying to find words.

"Do you want to talk about it?" Eddie's voice is serious and his expression is even more so. Richie wants to kick himself.

"Uh," Richie snorts, shaking his head. "Not with your hand down my pants?"

"Okay," and Richie thinks that will be it, leaning back down to press his forehead against Eddie's shoulder, but Eddie's pulling his hand back *out* of Richie's boxers and resting it on his hip again.

Richie lets out the breath he didn't realize he'd been holding, shuts his eyes tightly, and waits for the shame to burn hot in the pit of his stomach. He could feel the weight of Eddie's attention on him so he took another moment, drew in another deep breath, and did his best to collect himself. He moved as slowly and gingerly as his suddenly awkward limbs would let him, detangling his legs from Eddie's so he could lie beside him instead of on top of him. Richie didn't move far, though, swinging an arm over Eddie's waist and keeping his head pillowed on Eddie's arm.

"I'm sorry," He felt himself say without much thought - for ruining the moment, Richie left unsaid.

"Don't be." Eddie's lips press to the crown of Richie's head as the words leave his mouth, and Richie couldn't bring himself to try to meet Eddie's undoubtedly concerned gaze. He knows Eddie's waiting

for an answer, and he knows Eddie won't press if he says he doesn't want to talk, but he also knows Eddie will wait him out. Eddie will wait until he *is* ready and he'll be soft and concerned and sweet about it. Richie doesn't want to need that.

Richie's next inhale catches in his throat and he winces. He's not crying and he's not *going* to cry about this - again - but the guilt and shame weigh heavy on his chest. "I uh," His voice is raw and cracked and that isn't how he wants to have this conversation, so he clears his throat and starts again."I can't remember feeling anything but **dirty** and ashamed. Reflexively I keep expecting to feel that with you."

Richie can't see it, because he has his face pressed against Eddie's shirt on his shoulder, but he can feel it when Eddie winces. Richie makes a pained sound, fingers twitching and grabbing the fabric on Eddie's hips. "But I *don't*. I don't."

He can feel the frames of his glasses protest when he presses his face harder against Eddie, so he takes another breath and pulls back. He props himself up on his elbow, feeling raw and exposed hovering above Eddie's face, and forces himself to maintain eye contact. "But I can't unlearn that gut reaction overnight,"

Eddie's nodding like he understands, and he probably *does*, and he's reaching up to brush Richie's hair back out of his eyes. Eddie's adjusting his glasses on the bridge of his nose and Richie's still waiting for the anger, or the annoyance, or **something** that doesn't come.

"I'm not upset with you," Eddie says like he'd been reading Richie's mind. His fingers are running through Richie's hair again: it's a soothing feeling for the both of them. "I appreciate the honesty."

Richie huffs out a breath of laughter and it doesn't feel forced like he expected it to. A beat later and he's slumping forward, tension bleeding out of his body. The bulk of his weight lands back on Eddie, but he'd mindful of where he lets himself land.

"God, you're heavy," Eddie complains, but there's no weight behind his words. He squirms, pokes, and prods at Richie until Richie's laughing and rolling over onto his other side. Richie lays with his

back to Eddie and for a short, terrifying moment he thinks Eddie is going to get up and leave. Eddie doesn't, of course. He reaches next to himself to pull the thin comforter over the both of them and he's immediately pressed back up against Richie.

Richie's laughing again when Eddie manages to wrap his whole body around him, arms around his waist, knees snug under Richie's own, and cheek pressed against his shoulder. "Octopus ass bitch," The words are mumbled and Eddie pinches Richie's waist in retaliation.

"Shut up,"

Richie grins, weaving his fingers between Eddie's to bring his hand up to his mouth. He presses a soft kiss to Eddie's knuckles that's more grin than a kiss. A beat of silence and Richie's hit with how exhausted he really is. He reaches up to take his glasses off, because Eddie would probably kill him if he fell asleep with them on *again*, careful not to jostle Eddie too much as he puts them next to his phone on the nightstand.

"I love you," He says into the silence of the room, but he thinks Eddie is already asleep.

Notes for the Chapter:

this uhhhh. this didn't go how i planned it to at all.
but i'm actually happy with it. i think i'm gonna
crank out a "5+1 times richie and eddie tried to
have sex and one time they did!" maybe. we'll see
thank you so much for all the sweet comments !

Author's Note:

i don't even go here
all mistakes are my own